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ABSTRACT

The results of a meeting of the Toronto Board of Education are given. Basically, a special program for students was examined. Two kinds of data were used to assess school achievement: school marks and reading test scores. Students in the special program were matched with students who met the following criteria: (1) came from the same senior school; (2) were the same sex; (3) were born in the same year; and (4) were going to the same secondary school and the same program. Results are presented in tabular form. (CK)

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ACHIEVEMENT OF SPECIAL PROGRAMME (SENIOR - A.V.) GRADUATES

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#104

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ACHIEVEMENT OF SPECIAL PROGRAMME
(SENIOR - A.V.) GRADUATES

At the special meeting of March 10, 1971, the following was approved by the Board of Education:

> "(j) The Research Department of the Board of Education undertake a study to compare the secondary school achievement of graduates of the Special Programme (Sr. - A.V.) with that of similar students who were transferred to secondary school from the regular programme."

The first concern in meeting the request was to identify the "similar" students. Using a file especially created for this project, the Computer Services Department was able to create a series of matches. The Special Programme (Senior - A.V.) students in the school year 1970-71 were matched with students who met the following criteria:

i) came from the same senior school;
ii) were the same sex;
iii) were born in the same year;
iv) were going to the same secondary school and the same programme.

There were 249 such matches. Of the group not from Special Programme (Senior - A.V.), 7 had transferred from Grade 7, 221 had transferred from Grade 8, and 22 had been promoted from Grade 8.

Two kinds of data were used to assess school achievement: school marks and, where available, reading test scores that were collected as part of the study for the Fundamental Skills Committee.

While the subjects and the marking standards might vary from school to school and from programme to programme, the matching students from the same school neutralizes this factor. Because not all secondary schools administered the reading test and because mid-term marks were not

available from one school, the number of students varies somewhat for the different comparisons. Again the matching procedures make it possible to compare the two groups with a high level of confidence.

The results of the comparisons are presented in Table 1. Although the group of students from the Special Programme (Senior - A.V.) have lower scores on all measures than the matched group of students, the differences are NOT statistically significant for any of the comparisons based on school marks. The differences are statistically significant for the reading test raw scores. An examination of the standard deviations shows that there is a great deal of variability in both groups, especially in school marks: about one-sixth of the students scored more than 15 points below the group average and a similar proportion scored more than 15 points above the group average. In other words, for school performance, the difference was greater among the students within a group than between the groups.

The results are consistent with those of a prior study conducted at Bickford Park High School five years ago.[1] In this study of Bickford Park students, the marks of students who came from A.V. classes were compared with students who had been transferees. Although, as a group, the transferees had higher average Grade 9 marks than the A.V. group, the difference was small and statistically insignificant.

In comparing these two groups of students it is probably wise to remember that students from the Special Programme (Senior - A.V.) had been identified as having academic difficulty and thus had received special placement while the transferees had not been so identified and placed. Furthermore, in this study 9 per cent of the comparison group

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1 Michael Houseley. A Preliminary Report on the Bickford Park Project. Toronto: The Board of Education for the City of Toronto, Research Department, 1967 (#40).

were promotees rather than transferees, students who had successfully completed Grade 8. Therefore there is some doubt that the chosen comparison group is really comparable. However, it represents the best available match.

TABLE 1

RESULTS IN GRADE 9 FOR SENIOR A.V. STUDENTS
AND MATCHED GROUP OF NON SENIOR A.V. STUDENTS

Test	A.V.		Non A.V.		Value of t
	Average	s.d.	Average	s.d.	
Gates-MacGinitie Raw Scores*					
Vocabulary	15.7	4.89	20.4	5.85	2.04**
Comprehension	21.9	7.70	29.5	8.29	2.26**
Average Marks[a]					
Christmas	55.2	14.11	58.4	16.39	.58
Easter	52.2	16.38	58.7	16.92	1.10
Final	53.0	16.78	60.0	15.07	1.24

* Test administered in early February, 1972.

** Difference significant at .05 level.

a Grade 9 marks, school year 1971-1972.